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ABSTRACT

It is proposed that since patterns and routines seem to be of great importance in the early stages of first and second language learning, classroom conditions can promote similar early progress, both holistically and in the development of an internalized generative grammar. In addition, a modeled text is found to be more productive than unmodeled discourse. Classroom activities and routines that both pattern responses and simulate real situations are suggested. These activities fall, pedagogically, into a middle ground between drills and free communicative use of language, and are proposed for any general purpose course. Examples of the kind of classroom routine recommended include calling roll at the beginning of class and having verbal exchanges regarding written exercises. Routine review activities include asking or telling about a person, place, and so on. Dialog and guided conversations suggested include a Friday conversation in anticipation of the weekend, or a cocktail party conversation. (MSE)

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LEARNING BY HEART AND BY HABIT

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The two extremes of foreign language teaching are presentation and first practice on the one hand and the communicative use of the language on the other. The former is associated in modern methodology with drilling, the production of a list of model sentences; the latter with extemporization, the production of whatever language is necessary to carry out a communicative task, the production of a text. Some teaching tends to concentrate its efforts toward the first extreme, especially the teaching of a foreign language in difficult circumstances (e.g. English teaching in Mexican secondary schools). Other methodologists and teachers tend to emphasize the second extreme, especially the avant-garde working in favorable circumstances (e.g. teaching English to foreigners in Britain or the United States). However, the most enlightened teachers attempt to span the whole range of teaching from one extreme to the other, perhaps in carefully planned steps and stages.

Sometimes it is difficult to classify an activity, as when one student is required to reconstruct a diagram he cannot see by asking another student, who has the original diagram, questions such as, "Is there a small triangle?" to obtain information such as, "Yes, there's one to the left of the large circle." Here communication must be achieved across an information gap, but the linguistic product is an unnatural list of "Is there?" questions and answers; it is a "communicative drill." Also, between the two extremes mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there is a broad range of activities that exploit texts, which can look at least, like the linguistic product of natural discourse. Here text is being contrasted with list, and is understood to be the normal linguistic product of

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discourse (Davies and White, forthcoming). So:

LIST		TEXT
What's this?	It's a pen.	Excuse me!
What's that?	It's an apple.	Yes?
What's that?	It's a key.	Is this yours?
What's this?	It's a watch.	Er ... What is it?
What's that?	It's a book.	It's a key.
What's this?	It's an orange.	Oh yes! Thank you.
Etc.	Etc.	You're welcome.

In this paper we shall be looking first at some examples of this broad range of text-based activities which fall short, initially at least, of full communicative extemporization. Then we shall briefly consider the main arguments, theoretical and practical, in favor of using some activities of this kind in all general purpose courses.

CLASSROOM ROUTINES

The classroom is the real immediate environment of formal language learning. As in life outside the classroom, life inside the classroom falls into behavioral routines (some of them undesirable). The teacher calls the roll, sets tasks, evaluates performance, etc. in routine ways. The students behave in routine ways as a group and as individuals. Verbal routines can be established (i.e. taught almost like fixed dialogues at first) for many recurrent events in the classroom. For example:

1. <u>Calling roll</u>

T. Manuel Pérez.
S. Here.
T. Susana Martínez..... Not here? Where is she? Does anybody know?
S. She's at home.
T. Why?
S. She's ill.

T. I see. Thank you, María. Juan Maldonado.
S. Here.
T. Velia Marín
S. Here.
T. Daniel Oropeza..... Not here? Where is he? Etc.

2. During written exercises

T. Have you finished?
SS. No/Yes.
T. Ah. You've finished, Susana?
S. Yes.
T. You haven't finished, Juan?
S. No.
T. Which one are you doing?
S. Number 7.
T. I see. Carry on.

(Repeat one minute later. Etc.)

3. At the beginning of class

T. Good morning.
SS. Good morning, Miss Solana.
T. How are you this morning, José? (He had a cold last week.)
S. Fine, thank you, Miss Solana.
T. Good. What day is it today?
SS. It's Monday.
T. And what's the date?
SS. It's October 4th.
T. That's right. Will you write the day and the date on the board, Pedro?

ROUTINE REVIEW ACTIVITIES

These are initially intended to review a range of language patterns, e.g. questions and answers about a person, place or event, in the present or the past. However, if the activity revolves around a potentially interesting topic and if it is repeated, first in two or three consecutive classes and then periodically, the students' ability to handle a given range of language forms fluently should grow more than with disconnected review activities. The initial classroom routine situation can be transformed, partially at least, into a situation in which the students genuinely seek to satisfy their curiosity. For example:

1. Asking about a person, place, etc.

The teacher first reviews question forms:

T. What questions can you ask about a person? You can ask who a person is: "Who's the girl in the photograph?" What else?
S. How old is she?
T. Good. How old?
S. Where's she from?
Etc.

T. writes up:
Who - ?
How old - ?
Where - from?
Is - ?
Can - ?
What - like?

Then the teacher shows a photograph or writes up the name of a friend, a relative, a famous person (not likely to be known by the students), etc.

T. Do you know this person? No? Well, ask me about him.
S. Who is he?
T. He's a friend of mine.
S. Where's he from?
T. Ireland. He's from Dublin; that's the capital of Ireland.
S. How old is he?
Etc.

The question-answer stage can be followed by a reporting stage: "Right. Now what do you know about (the person, place, etc.)?"

2. Telling about a place, person, etc.

The teacher gives a list of questions:

Where is it?
What is the population?
What places of interest are there in the city?
Etc.

The teacher tells the students to choose any city they like and to be ready with the answers to the questions about the city next class. Next class the teacher asks different students about the city they chose, or gets other students to ask them.

Later, Activity 1 can serve the teacher as an impromptu "filler" at the end of a class or when a sudden change of activity seems appropriate. The topics can be chosen according to the interests of the group (an attractive young man or woman, an unusual car like a Ferrari or an Aston Martin, an exotic country like Nepal or Indonesia, etc.). The linguistic forms will vary somewhat according to the topic, and for both Activity 1 and 2 work can begin at quite an elementary level (simply "is" with "What/What color/Where - from/How old old/Is/Etc") and be extended progressively as new forms from the syllabus are presented.

DIALOGUES AND GUIDED CONVERSATION

Short dialogues can be memorized, acted out, and modified by students. This can be a dead, mechanical activity if the dialogue is difficult to dramatize or difficult for the students to adopt, as it were, as their own speech. Many textbook dialogues are difficult in just these ways, but even then some teachers can work wonders. The little dialogue given as an example of a text (in contrast with

a list) at the beginning of this paper, can work well even in very large groups. It can be taught first as a fixed text via listening, repetition (half-class choral, and individual) and recall from memory. Then pairs of students should act out different versions, substituting only the object left behind (key/watch/pen/etc.). This dialogue can be used before the students have studied "yours" (here in the set expression, "Is this yours?"), and can do as much for the patterns "What is it?"/"It's a-an ---." as half an hour of drilling. Such dialogues (or at least the ones that have proved they work well) can be acted out several times in successive classes. A month after the introduction of this dialogue it could be acted out as a review or change of activity by one ot two pairs of students, along with a plural version ("Are these yours?/ Er...What are they?/ They're sunglasses-gloves-keys-etc."). Here are some more examples of dialogues for memorization, acting out, and modification. They can lead into conversational routines.

1. The Friday dialogue

Joe: Phew! Thank goodness it's Friday!
Sue: Yes. What are you going to do this weekend?
Joe: I'm not sure. I'm going to study a bit tomorrow, I think. On Sunday I'm going to play tennis. What about you?
Sue: I'm going to York for the weekend. I'm going to stay with some friends there.
Joe: That's nice. Well, have a good time.
Sue: You too. Don't study too much! See you on Monday.
Joe: Bye.

Substitutions can be written on the board:

going to Oaxaca/the football game/a party/the cinema/ etc.
going for a picnic/a drink with some friends/a meal/ etc.
going shopping/swimming/dancing/etc.
going to study/work/play/etc.

After acting out the model dialogue, students should modify it to talk about their own real plans for the weekend. A dialogue can also be taught for Mondays ("Hello, Sue. Did you have a good weekend? Etc.") For both the Friday and the Monday dialogue the teacher should be standing by to provide students (working in pairs) with the vocabulary they need to talk about their own real plans and activities. Once again, I advocate that these dialogues (or the "conversations" developed from them) should not be done one Friday and one Monday and then forgotten forever, but that they should be done (and developed) Friday after Friday and Monday after Monday - until the students get tired of them, at which point they should be dropped for a while and then done periodically long afterwards. Mondays and Fridays are as real a situation inside the classroom as out.

2. <u>The cocktail party</u>

She: Nice party.
He: Pardon?
She: This is a nice party.
He: Oh ... er ... yes, it is.
She: My name's Lesley Blake.
He: Pleased to meet you. I'm Pat Conrad.
She: What do you do?
He: I'm a dentist. What about you?
She: I'm a student. I study psychology. Where are you from, Pat?
He: Er ... Milwaukee. Oh, er, excuse me. I can see a friend of mine over there. It was nice talking to you.
She: Yes. I hope to see you again sometime.
He: Sure. Goodbye.

After several pairs of students have acted out this dialogue from memory, the teacher can give everybody cue-cards, or let students create their own characters (i.e. their own sub-

stitutions). Then everybody stands up and joins the party. Students should escape from conversations (as in the model) and circulate, opening up as many brief conversations as possible with other students. Once again, I recommend that this should not be a one-time effort, but should be repeated and developed over a long period.

Space does not permit the presentation of more text-based activities here, and I should proceed to the justification, promised at the beginning of this paper, for spending a certain amount of time on such routine or repeated activities in any general purpose course. If most practising teachers reading this paper agree that what I have suggested is well worthwhile, then my main purpose has already been achieved. However, there are arguments against parroting, memorization of texts and mechanical substitution, and these could be turned against some of the activities I have recommended. Also, there is a learning-to-communicate-by-communicating school of thought which takes these arguments a step further and advocates a heavy emphasis on information-gap tasks, problem-solving, loose role-playing, and other activities involving the free "negotiation of meaning" (e.g. Allwright, 1976). I do not believe there is any serious conflict between this school of thought and the viewpoint presented here. The direction and the goal is the same: that students should acquire usable linguistic resources and develop the ability to use them creatively. But I am perhaps more concerned with what is pedagogically feasible in the early stages of foreign language teaching/learning (when many students desert physically or emotionally), and in difficult conditions (in which such considerations acquire greater importance).

Briefly, my main arguments are as follows.

1. Patterns (i.e. phrase and sentence formulae) and routines (i.e. set patterns of exchanges, or 'scripts') are generally considered to be of great importance in the early stages of first and second language learning (Clark 1974, Halliday 1975, Fillmore 1976 and Sampson 1982). The acquisition of patterns and routines is cer-

tainly aided by the restricted and recurrent nature of the young child's or the foreign language learner's life in relation to the language being learnt. The child's daily round of nappy-changes, meals, play, baths and bed is accompanied by a daily round of verbal routines. The adult in a foreign country may fairly soon become quite proficient in handling certain recurrent situations (e.g. meeting people for the first time: "Ah, you're from Mexico, are you?/How long have you been here?/What do you think of...?"), but will probably struggle outside these, which is no reason to scorn the proficiency in those routines. The suggestions in this paper are aimed at creating conditions for similar early progress in the classroom.

2. There is some controversy over whether learnt patterns are "analyzed out" by the learner and thus contribute to the development of an internalized grammar, or whether they are useful only as temporary props later thrown away. Krashen (1961) takes the latter view, but the weight of evidence and argument (references as above) appear to support the former. Also, Richards (1983), citing Pawley and Syder (at press), argues that native speakers continue to use thousands of formulae and memorized chunks of language throughout their lives. If this is so, classroom routines, dialogues and so on can make a permanent contribution to language learning in two ways: holistically and in the development of an internalized generative grammar.

3. It is pedagogically easier, especially with beginners and in difficult conditions, to work from a model text as a point of departure than to engage students in unmodeled discourse. Can text-based activities lead to discourse? Widdowson, who devised the text-discourse distinction, speaks of "the recovery of discourse" from text (1981). Theatre specializes in precisely this, and language teaching would seem to have a genuine interest in the same process. In fact, this process is essential to all communicative use of language, and if you find my text becoming somewhat dense at this point, you are simply struggling more consciously than usual with this same process of recover-

ing discourse from text. Moreover, the taught texts discussed in this paper are simply models for future verbal behavior; the important thing is to create further real or realistic situations for such verbal behavior (as life does for the child and the foreign resident).

In this paper I have focused on the area between drills on the one hand and the free communicative use of language on the other, specifically the area of text-based activities. Initially these may be close to drills, but if repeated and modified in real situations (the classroom, Mondays, Fridays, etc.) and realistic situations (simulations, role-plays, etc.), they can move into the realm of authentic discourse. Routines, in the classroom as in life outside, can come into conflict with motivation and immediate interest, but, for most people, familiarity breeds confidence for a long time before it breeds contempt.

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